

# Mindfulness

## The Only Path to Deliverance

*(Vibhaṅga Sutta)* - *(Samyutta Nikāya, Satipaṭṭhāna Samyutta, 326p)*

Mindfulness is a main teaching in Buddhism like the heart of Buddhism. All Buddhist doctrines which belong to the ultimate truth for liberation can be included in Mindfulness. According to Vibhaṅga Sutta in Satipaṭṭhāna Samyutta (SN), the Buddha explains three stages of mindfulness which is a main teaching in Buddhism for inner peace. Those three stages are;

1. Mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna*)
2. Mindfulness Meditation (*Satipaṭṭhānabhāvanā*)
3. The path that leads to mindfulness meditation. (*Satipaṭṭhānabhāvanāgāmini paṭipadam*)

If someone can understand these three stages, it is very easy to cleanse the path of liberation and practice mindfulness and gain the results maximumly for the purification of mind.

All Buddhist doctrines that the Buddha has explained in 45 years of his ministry focus on how to achieve happiness. That means nothing else, but getting rid of suffering. That's why the Buddha says in the past and in the present, I explain only two things which are suffering and the cessation of suffering. The main purpose of all beings is to be happy. Although they do everything in the name of happiness, unfortunately, they mostly live unhappily, or their hopes end with sorrow. The main reason for this situation is though we do everything to overcome illness, death and separation, those things themselves cause us to create suffering again and again. Here, the supreme Buddha always preaches us how to overcome suffering truly and live with real happiness. If we can listen to his message and practice it in our lives, we can get rid of suffering and achieve real happiness in this life itself. **Mindfulness which is praised and recommended many times in Buddhism is one of the most important doctrines that we should practice for liberation.** Especially, *Vibhaṅga Sutta* in Samyutta Nikāya describes mindfulness in three stages which are very important to know by everyone who likes to practice mindfulness in the proper way to achieve liberation.

Buddhism explains the reasons we suffer. Birth is suffering. Decay is suffering. Sickness is suffering. Death is suffering... Finally, Buddhism concludes all sufferings in five aggregates. In short, arising of the five aggregates is suffering (*Samkhittena pañcupādānakkhandā dukkhā*). The path of getting rid of suffering depends on understanding and releasing the grasping of the five aggregates. Practicing mindfulness is the path that leads to the liberation from the suffering of the five aggregates.

Mindfulness guides us how to live in the present moment. When we spend our life, we mostly live in the past or future. Unfortunately, we don't know that we live in the past or future because of ignorance and lack of mindfulness. We have lost the chance of seeing the beauty of the present

experience. By practicing mindfulness, we train our mind not to go to the past or future without awareness, but to live in the present moment seeing the world reality. Our success or happiness and how far we have overcome suffering depend on how much we have practiced mindfulness. By practicing mindfulness, we train our mind to be aware of our mind and body. Mindfulness is the best friend who brings real happiness. Mind with mindfulness is the best friend. Similarly, mind without mindfulness is the worst enemy. We should be clever enough to live with the best friend getting rid of the worst enemy.

The importance of practicing mindfulness is always emphasized among Buddhist doctrines. Mindfulness is the seventh factor of the Noble Eightfold Path; it is the third faculty (or *indriya*) of The Five Spiritual Faculties; and it is also the first faculty of The Seven Enlightenment Faculties. Therefore, we can understand how important it is in Buddhism. Mindfulness in Buddhism relates to wisdom which is the understanding of impermanence.

All Buddhist teachings can be included into one topic that is mindfulness. Our spiritual success and real happiness depend on how far we have practiced mindfulness in our lives. Practicing Buddhism means practicing mental culture. Practicing mental culture means practicing mindfulness. Also, practicing mindfulness means practicing happiness. Finally, we can say very clearly practicing all teachings of the Buddha means practicing mindfulness. The entire dispensation of the Buddha depends on practicing mindfulness. Hence mindfulness is highly praised in Buddhism.

That is why Buddhism illustrates the one and only way;

for the purification of beings (*Sattānaṃ visuddhiyā*),

for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation (*sokapariddavānaṃ samatikkhamāya*),

for the destruction of pain and grief (*dukkhadomanassānaṃ attamgamaya*),

for the gaining of wisdom (*ñāyassa adhiḡamāya*)

for the attaining or realization of Nibbana or enlightenment (*nibbānassa sacchikiriyāya*)

which is practicing the fourfold mindfulness.

### *Satipaṭṭhāna, Satipaṭṭhāna Bhāvanā* and *Satipaṭṭhānabhāvanāgāmini patipadā* Mindfulness, Mindful Meditation and the path of Mindful Meditation

When we discuss mindfulness, we can see that a lot of people discuss it everywhere in the current society. Mostly they say mindfulness is that living in the present moment. Actually, this is not an exact definition for mindfulness according to Buddhism. Mindfulness is not just living in the present moment. Mindfulness, which leads to overcome all sufferings completely, has a wide meaning in Buddhism. According to *Vibhanga Sutta* in Satipaṭṭhāna Samyutta of Samyutta Nikāya, he who wants to know and practice mindfulness should know three things about mindfulness.

“*Satipaṭṭhānaṅca vo, bhikkhave, desessāmi satipaṭṭhānabhāvanaṅca satipaṭṭhānabhāvanāgāminiṅca paṭipadam*”

They are Mindfulness, mindful meditation and the path of mindful meditation. **Mindfulness means keeping our attention in four areas as body, feelings, consciousness and mental formations. Mindful meditation means reflecting on the impermanence of the body, feelings, consciousness and mental formations as arising and ceasing** (*Katamā ca, bhikkhave, satipaṭṭhānabhāvanā? Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu samudayadhammānupassī kāyasmim viharati, vayadhammānupassī kāyasmim viharati, samudayavayadhammānupassī kāyasmim viharati,...*). **The path to mindful meditation means** (*Katamā ca, bhikkhave, satipaṭṭhānabhāvanāgāminī paṭipadā? Ayameva ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo....*) **understanding the noble eightfold path which consists with the four noble truths.** The Noble Eightfold Path is,

Right Understanding	( <i>Sammā diṭṭhi</i> )
Right Thoughts	( <i>Sammā saṃkappa</i> )
Right Speech	( <i>Sammā vācā</i> )
Right Action	( <i>Sammā kammantha</i> )
Right Livelihood	( <i>Sammā ājiva</i> )
Right Effort	( <i>Sammā vāyāma</i> )
Right Mindfulness	( <i>Sammā sati</i> )
Right Concentration	( <i>Sammā samādhi</i> )

The Buddha always emphasizes the importance vision to his disciples at the beginning of practice. That's why the Buddha says I proclaim the liberation for those who know the path who see the path. **Vision is first, then mission (practice). Mission without vision is blind. Also, vision without mission is useless.** Buddhist vision is understanding the dependent origination which is the eternal theory of arising and ceasing of suffering

## The Dependent Origination - The Law of Cause & Effect (*Paticcasumuppāda*)

Buddhism always points out the path to overcome suffering and achieve the final liberation. The Buddha's main purpose was to explain the path that leads to cessation of suffering. If someone understands the suffering, he realizes the origin of suffering. If someone realizes the origin of suffering, he understands the cessation of suffering. If someone understands the cessation of suffering, he goes forward on the path that leads to the cessation of suffering. When one truth is realized by a wise person, the other truths are also understood (*Gavampati Sutta*). This is the nature of the understanding of the four noble truths. The dependent origination is the process of the arising and ceasing of suffering and the world as well.

Understanding the dependent origination is the turning point, and it is unique in Buddhism. The dependent origination is like the heart of Buddhism. He who understands the dependent origination understands himself and the world. Also, understanding the dependent origination leads to understanding the Supreme Buddha. Hence understanding the four noble truths, the dependent origination and the Buddha are interrelated. That's why the Buddha says;

He who sees the dependent origination sees the Dhamma.  
He who sees the Dhamma sees the dependent origination.

*(Yo paticcasamuppādaṃ passati, so dhammaṃ passasati,  
Yo dhammaṃ passati so paticcasamuppādaṃ passati)*

He who sees the dhamma sees me (the Buddha). He who sees me (the Buddha) sees the Dhamma.  
*(Yo dhammaṃ passati so maṃ passati yo maṃ passati so dhammaṃ passati)*

Above four things, the fourfold noble truth (*Cattāri ariyasaccāni*) is based on understanding of the dependent origination (*Paticcasamuppāda*). Understanding the dependent origination is like understanding the heart of Buddhism. On the other hand, understanding the four noble truths depends on understanding ignorance. In short, the meaning of ignorance is the lack of understanding of the cause and effect of suffering. When we experience something through our senses like the eye or ear, that experience doesn't come to the present from the past, also that experience doesn't go to the future from the present. This is the ultimate truth which happens in our experiential world whether we like it or not. Unfortunately, because of lack of comprehension people think that before we experience something, it happened. And also, after the experience, it remains. This is the way that the world thinks. This is the ignorance that we have to overcome as much as we are knowledgeable about what the Buddha explained.

Early morning on the Vesak Full moon day, the Buddha got enlightened in Bodh Gaya. The supreme Buddha by his wisdom realized and reflected on cause and effect of suffering that the world suffers with decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair. At that moment he realized reasons of suffering one by one orderly. There he understood the closest reason for decay (*Jarā*), death (*Marana*), sorrow (*Soka*), lamentation (*parideva*), pain (*Dukkha*), grief (*Domanassa*) and despair (*Upāyāsa*) as birth (*Jāti*). Then he analyzed why birth happens. Here he saw the reason for birth as the process of becoming (or existence=*Bhava*). The Buddha again investigated the reason for the process of becoming. He understood the reason for becoming as clinging (*Upādāna*). Next, he considered the reason for clinging as craving (*Taṇhā*). After that he realized the reason for craving as sensation (or feeling=*Vedanā*). When he reflected on the cause of feeling, he understood the reason for feeling as contact (or impression = *Phassa*). Then he recognized six senses (*Salāyatana*) as the cause of contact. Again, while he was investigating the reason for six senses, he knew mind and matter (Mentality and corporeality = *Nama Rupa*). When he analyzed the cause of mind and matter, he understood consciousness (*Viññāṇa*). After that he

examined the reason for consciousness as volitional actions (*Samkhāra*). Finally, he clearly explored those volitional actions arise because of ignorance (*Avijjā*). When we are ignorant of volitional actions other causes of suffering arise like decay, death etc. According to this discovery, the Buddha understood the process of our entire life cycle in the Sansāric Journey. Here we can classify all of them in an order like this;

Ignorance conditions volitional actions (Mental-formations)

(*Avijjā paccayā samkhārā*).

Volitional actions condition consciousness (*Samkhāra paccayā viññāṇaṃ*).

Consciousness conditions mentality & materiality (*Viññāṇa paccayā nāmarūpaṃ*).

Mentality-materiality conditions six senses (i.e., five physical sense-organs and mind)

(*Nāmarūpa paccayā salāyatanaṃ*)

Six senses condition contact (*Salāyatana paccayā phassa*)

Contact conditions sensation (*Phassa paccayā vedanā*)

Sensation conditions craving (*Vedanā paccayā taṇhā*)

Craving conditions clinging (*Taṇhā paccayā upādānaṃ*)

Clinging conditions process of becoming (*Upādāna paccayā bhava*)

Process of becoming conditions birth (*Bhava paccayā jāti*)

Birth conditions decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair

(*Jāti paccayā jarā maraṇa soka parideva dukkha domanassa upāyasā*)

This discovery can be seen only in a dispensation of a Buddha. It can't be seen in any other religion or philosophy. Buddhism has explained this process using several terms like;

*Ariya ṅāya* – The theory of the Buddha

*Paticcasamuppāda* – The dependent origination

*Hetuphala Dhamma* – The law of cause and effect

*Idappaccayatā* – The process of cause and effect

<b>Past</b>	1. Ignorance – <i>Avijjā</i> 2. Volitional formations - <i>Samkhāra</i>	Karma – Formation ( <i>Kamma Bhava</i> )
<b>Present</b>	3. Consciousness – <i>Viññāṇa</i> 4. Mentality & Materiality - <i>Nāma-rūpa</i> (Mind & Matter) 5. Six Senses - <i>Salāyatana</i> 6. Contact - <i>Phassa</i> 7. Feeling - <i>Vedanā</i>	Rebirth Process ( <i>Upapatti Bhava</i> )

	8. Craving - <i>Taṇhā</i> 9. Clinging – <i>Upādāna</i> 10. Existence of becoming - <i>Bhava</i>	Karma Process ( <i>Kamma – Bhava</i> )
<b>Future</b>	11. Birth - <i>Jāti</i> 12. Decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair - <i>Jāti nirodhā jarā maraṇa soka parideva dukka domanassa upāyāsā</i>	Rebirth – Process ( <i>Upapatti Bhava</i> )

Main difference in Buddhism, when compared with other religions and philosophies, is the theory of cause and effect (causality). All other religions, philosophies and sciences explain their teachings and theories depending on the conventional truth. According to the conventional truth before we experience there was a world and also after our experience the world remains. According to the dependent origination in Buddhism where the ultimate truth is explained, before we experience there was no world and also after our experience the world doesn't remain. The experience or the world arises and ceases as the result of conditions coming together and separating.

When our eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind contact with external objects such as forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touch, mental formations, the experience arises at the moment. Simultaneously, five aggregates (form, feelings, perception, mental formation and consciousness) arise when a sense contacts with an object and mind. These five aggregates are the bottom line of all our experiences which we receive through our senses. The nature of these five aggregates is that it wasn't here before the experience. And also, it doesn't remain after the experience. This is the main teaching that the Buddha realized, discovered and preached to the world to get rid of suffering. The Buddha has explained this theory in various ways in his teachings like this;

When this is, that is (*Iti imasmiṃ sati idaṃ hoti*)

With the arising of this - this arises (*Imassa Uppādā idaṃ uppajjati*)

When this not being, this doesn't come to be (*Imasmiṃ asati idaṃ na hoti*)

With the cessation of this - this ceases (*Imassa nirodha idaṃ nirujjhati*)

Eye is impermanent (*Cakkhuṃ aniccaṃ*)

Forms are impermanent (*Rūpaṃ aniccaṃ*)

Eye consciousness is impermanent (*Chakkhu Viññāṇaṃ aniccaṃ*)

Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation.

(*yaṃ kiñci samudayadhammaṃ sabbaṃ taṃ nirodhadhammaṃ*”ti)

**Not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence. Being occurred (at the present) will not come to (the future) occurrence** (*ahutvā sambhutam hutvā na bhavissati*).

Understanding of Buddhism equals how far we have understood this theory, the dependent origination. If someone has a clear knowledge about, he is knowledgeable about suffering. Understanding suffering causes the understanding of the four noble truths. If someone knows suffering as a lack of knowledge of this theory, listening to what the Buddha taught he tries to understand the dependent origination, five aggregates and four noble truths as much as he can. And also, he always tries to practice the path to get rid of suffering. Here he has to practice three disciplines. They are;

1. Virtue                      (*Sīla*)
2. Tranquility               (*Samādhi*)
3. Wisdom                    (*Paññā*)

First of all, he disciplines his physical and verbal actions with the knowledge of the dependent origination. Having a good discipline in speech and behavior, he gradually trains his mind in tranquility by practicing concentration meditation. Because of his clear knowledge about the process of how suffering arises with a concentrated mind he reflects on impermanence. Here he always reflects on the arising and ceasing of the five aggregates. As much as he can examine, his ignorance gradually decreases. Simultaneously, the arising of other parts of dependent origination of his life also decreases. As the result of practicing this path, suffering gradually decreases. He always tries to live with virtue and concentration, seeing insight as impermanence. Also, he is aware of the present moment. This is the way how ignorance ceases and other things decrease with ignorance gradually;

With the cessation of ignorance, volitional formations cease

*(Avijjāyatveva asesavirāga nirodhā saṃkhāra nirodho)*

With the cessation of volitional formations, consciousness cease

*(Saṃkhāra nirodhā viññāna nirodho)*

With the cessation of consciousness, mentality and materiality (Mind & Matter) cease

*(Viññāna nirodhā nāmarūpa nirodho)*

With the cessation of mentality and materiality, six senses cease

*(Nāmrūpa nirodhā salāyatana nirodho)*

With the cessation of six senses, contact ceases

*(Salāyatana nirodhā phassa nirodho)*

With the cessation of contact, sensation ceases

*(Phassa nirodhā vedanā nirodho)*

With the cessation of sensation, craving ceases

*(Vedanā nirodhā taṇhā nirodho)*

With the cessation of craving, clinging ceases

*(Taṇhā nirodhā upādāna nirodho)*

With the cessation of clinging, the process of becoming ceases

*(Upādāna nirodhā bhava nirodho)*

With the cessation of the process of becoming, birth ceases  
(*Bhava nirodhā jāti nirodho*)

With the cessation of birth, decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair cease  
(*Jāti nirodhā jarā marana soka parideva dukka domanassa upāyāsā*)

This is the way that the Buddha pointed out to get rid of suffering and achieve the final bliss of liberation. For this result we should dedicate all our things like time, wealth, effort in this time when the Buddha's dispensation has appeared in the world. Actually, we were born in this world in this time to attain liberation. Therefore, we have to attempt as much as we can. Practicing the path of deliverance (*Mokkha Magga*) is the most beneficial thing that we receive throughout our life as wise people. With this understanding we find the path of liberation which is mindfulness.

The *Satipatthāna Sutta* deals with the fourfold development of 'Sati', mindfulness and 'Patthāna', establishment or practice. So '*Satipatthāna*' means establishment of mindfulness. The main purpose of practicing mindfulness is to investigate what happens to our mind and body and finally understand whole life. If we can clearly understand the process of our life as it is, we can overcome all sufferings that we worry about in our day-to-day life and in the whole *Sansāric* journey.

Here it is said the four types of areas where we practice mindfulness. They are;

- The Contemplation (or mindfulness) of the body (*Kāyānupassanā*)
- The Contemplation (or mindfulness) of sensation or feelings (*Vedanānupassanā*)
- The Contemplation (or mindfulness) of mind (*Cittānupassanā*)
- The Contemplation (or mindfulness) of mind-objects (*Dhammānupassanā*)

According to practicing mindfulness in these four areas, we develop our attention and awareness about our body and mind. And we practice our attention to live in the present moment consciously. We mostly suffer because of the past or the future. If we lose our attention with mindfulness about the present, it means we lose our happiness. That is why Buddhism emphasizes here the importance of developing mindfulness.

## • **The Contemplation of Body**

When we practice mindfulness in the field of the body, we develop it in six areas. They are;

- Mindfulness of breathing (*Ānāpāna*).  
When someone breathes, he does it consciously.



- Mindfulness of the four postures (*Iriyāpatha*)

When someone is **walking**, he knows he is walking. When someone is **standing**, he knows he is standing. When someone is sitting, he knows, he is **sitting**. When someone is **lying down**, he knows he is lying down.

- Mindfulness of clear awareness (*Sampajañña*)

When someone does everything from waking up to going to bed, he does all of them mindfully and wisely.

- Mindfulness or reflection on the repulsive: Parts of the body (*Patikkulamanasikāra*)

Here, the meditator considers all his (32) body parts such as hair, nail, teeth, skin are impure.

- Mindfulness of the four elements (*Dhātumanasikāra*)

Here, the meditator further pays attention to four elements like **earth** (*Paṭhavi*), **water** (*Āpo*), **fire** (*Tejo*) and **air** (*Vāyo*).

- Mindfulness of the Nine Charnel- Ground (*Navasīvathika*)

Here, the meditator recollects a dead body, what happens to the body after death (from moment of death to a skeleton). While he is investigating his own body according to above areas, he sees the arising and ceasing of the body.

- **The Contemplation of Feelings (or sensation)**

Here, someone feeling a pleasant feeling knows that he feels a **pleasant** feeling, feeling a **painful** feeling he knows that he feels a painful feeling, feeling a feeling that is **neither painful nor pleasant** he knows that he feels a feeling that is neither painful nor pleasant.

While he is investigating his whole feelings in this way, he sees the arising and ceasing of all feelings.

- **The Contemplation of Mind**

Here, the meditator considers his own mind whether it is **lustful or not, hating or not, deluded or undeluded, contracted or distracted, developed or undeveloped, surpassed or unsurpassed, concentrated or unconcentrated, liberated or unliberated**.

While he is investigating his mind process according to above areas, he sees arising and ceasing of mind.

- **The Contemplation of Mind-objects**

- **The five hindrances** (sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and scruples, skeptical doubt)
- **The five aggregates** (form, feeling, perception, mental formation, consciousness)
- **The six internal and external sense bases** (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind – sight, sound, smell, taste, touching, mind-objects)
- **The seven factors of enlightenment** (Mindfulness, Keen investigation, Energy, Rapture, Tranquility, Concentration, Equanimity)
- **The Four Noble Truths**
  1. The unsatisfactoriness (*Dukkha Sacca*),
  2. The cause of unsatisfactoriness (*Samudaya Sacca*),
  3. The cessation of unsatisfactoriness (*Nirodha Sacca*),
  4. The path that leads to cessation of unsatisfactoriness (*Magga Sacca*)

While he is investigating his whole mind objects according to the above areas as unwholesome and wholesome, he reflects the arising and ceasing of his mind objects.

As the result of practicing mindfulness by using Buddhist teachings, we don't stop only concentrating our mind. With the concentrated mind, we reflect on the world reality as impermanent seeing arising and ceasing of our mind and body. Here it is very important to understand the dependent origination. Our entire life is the five aggregates which arise at the moment with conditions and cease when conditions cease.

If we have any experience through our six senses, five aggregates arise together at the moment. Five aggregates are forms (*Rūpa-රූප*), feelings (*Vedanā-වේදනා*), perception (*Saññā-සဏ්ඤා*), mental formations (*Samkhāra-සංඛාර*) and mind (*Viññāṇa-විඤ්ඤාණ*). These five aggregates arise together at the moment when the conditions are together, and they instantly cease when the conditions separate. These five things appear behind any kind of experiences in our life, but they are invisible, and have to be known with insight. The nature of these five aggregates is arising and ceasing. At the moment of ceasing everything ceases without leaving anything remaining. The most valuable and interesting explanation in Buddhism is impermanence. It is said in Buddhism; **Not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence. Being occurred (at the present) will not come to (the future) occurrence** (*Ahuvā sambhūtaṃ hutvā na bhavissati*). This is the nature of impermanence that Buddhism illustrates. If something is impermanent (*Anicca*), it is suffering (*Dukkha*). If something is suffering, it is out of our control (*Anatta*). If someone can realize these three characteristics as the worldly reality, he is able to overcome suffering.

When we see this reality, we understand, there is nothing to grasp or reject. We comprehend our life as a conditioned process. There is no particular certain being or person, it is only a process which always arises and ceases. With this true understanding we can gradually overcome suffering. Little by little we go forward on the path of liberation from suffering and unsatisfactoriness. By practicing tranquility (*Samatha*) and insight (*Vipassanā*) meditation with discipline (*Sīla*) in speech and behavior, we reach the final bliss of liberation, full enlightenment. Here it is clear that mindfulness is the foundation of all doctrines. Living in mindfulness is like living in the field of the Buddha. It means we are away from suffering like decay, death and rebirth. Whenever we are away from mindfulness, then we are in the field of the Mara. It means we are not away from suffering like sorrow, lamentation, grief, pain, decay, sickness, death and rebirth.

As the result of practicing mindfulness, the five spiritual faculties are going to be filled. They are confidence, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom.

The Supreme Buddha often encourages us to make a refuge that none can disturb. Here the Buddha kindly emphasizes the path to make a refuge as practicing mindfulness. Living in mindfulness is like living in the field of the Buddha. The purpose of practicing mindfulness is to make an unshakable mind that none can disturb.

Dwell with yourselves as an island, with yourselves as a refuge, with no other refuge;  
dwell with the Dhamma as an island, with the Dhamma as a refuge, with no other refuge.

*Atta dīpā bhikkhave viharatha atta saraṇā na añña saraṇā,  
Dhamma dīpā bhikkhave viharatha dhamma saraṇā na añña saraṇā.*



**May the Triple Gem Bless you!**

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